

“SET DOWN MY NAME, SIR.”

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“SET DOWN MY NAME, SIR.”

WE have previously reminded our readers of the man of a very stout countenance who came up to the writer with the inkhorn at the door of the Interpreter's Palace, and when every man started back for fear of the armed men said, "Set down my name, Sir." This is a word for the present world crisis, and a word especially for Nonconformists, who glory in the name of CROMWELL, who was perhaps the greatest man of the English race.

It was CROMWELL and his like who protected both culture and religion in the hour of their direst need.

We are all asking ourselves how we shall each of us best perform his duty to his country and his GOD in this searching hour. There are very many to whom there comes as a voice without reply the call to enrol themselves in the Army of Britain.

I.

We begin by taking a general view of the situation as it presents itself while we write. We may say with confidence that not one of our military leaders doubts that this war will end in the defeat of Germany. But it is nearly certain that the close will be attained only after a terrific and prolonged strife. Lord KITCHENER is said to reckon the period at two or three years, and in one form or another the struggle may last even longer. There is nothing to surprise in what has already taken place. The British public have been greatly heartened by the report of Russian victories. Certainly the onward step of Russia is in the right path, and it is at least as quick and

unwavering as we had a right to expect. But the difficulties in the way are formidable, and it may take weeks or months ere they are overcome.

We have the comfort of being assured again by indisputable and glorious facts that the British soldiers man for man are the best in the world. Lord KITCHENER, Sir JOHN FRENCH, and our military leaders generally, have fully sustained the excellence of their record. Of our magnificent Navy nothing can be written worthy of the theme. We have supports advancing, and they cannot come too soon. We lay great stress on the fact that the people are at one. A Government to conduct successfully a war like this must be a Government of the whole nation. So long as it is the Government of only a majority of the nation, and its main business is to hold the fort against the storming columns of the minority, it has little energy for its proper work. But while this is not a time either for stupefaction or for raving, and not even a time for depression, it is emphatically a time which is calling men to their posts. We cannot be satisfied with an inadequate representation in the field. The gallant brothers who have so nobly fought our battle up till now must not fight in vain. All they have achieved and all they have suffered will come to nothing if they are not supported by continual reinforcements. New forces may come unexpectedly to our rescue, but new foes may also disclose themselves. Lord KITCHENER has told us that we need a field force of half a million men. We have heard a very good authority reckon the fighters on the field at present as about 120,000. The losses that have occurred have been repaired and more than repaired, but we agree with the *Spectator* that 500,000 men is a very low estimate in view of the stupendous numbers of our antagonists. We can easily put in the field the number required. Five hundred thousand men would mean about 1 per cent. of the population, and there is every sign that 2 per cent. will be needed ere the war is over.

Recruiting is good and excellent in many places, but it cannot be called satisfactory on the whole. The stream is not flowing as it should. In one respect there is reason for satisfaction. Ex-soldiers, who are the most desired because they can immediately take action, are doing magnificently. Mr. STRACHEY tells us of a meeting he addressed where the only recruit secured was an ex-soldier, who at once came forward, and so proved once more that the Army is the true school of patriotism. He had fought in South Africa, and might very well have said that he had done his bit, and that the young men might now do theirs. This, however, did not seem to occur to him. Such men, thank God, abound in our land, and they will not fail us. But there is an ominous unwillingness to give up the sports and the sportsmen wherein so large a part of the nation is interested. We would not look grudgingly on pleasures that are demanded by common flesh and blood, but young athletes should be in the field, and there should be a public opinion strong enough to coerce them into their duty. From our own personal knowledge we could mention a large district of the country from which not a single recruit has come, or had come a few days ago. We need men to begin their training at once, and to be ready to take the places of those who have done their part. In this connection we mention with special approval the efforts of our friend Mr. F. N. CHARRINGTON, who has been doing his best to rouse footballers to a sense of their duty in this matter. If voluntary effort fails, then there must be conscription, but that we hope and believe is needless.

II.

At the request of the Publicity Department of the War Office we wrote a short paper giving reasons why young men, and in particular young Nonconformists, should enrol themselves, and these reasons we now take leave to recapitulate.

1. To say that this nation did not desire war is to state the facts most inadequately. There is nothing we would not have done to save humanity from the hideous conflict that has set the whole world on fire. In spite of all that is dark and threatening, we hold fast to the faith that CHRIST is making a difference in His world, and certainly we never knew of the abhorrence of war among Nonconformists to be so strong, and even so violent, as it is now. The war was thrust upon us.

2. We went to war in order that we might be true to our sacred and solemn obligations. Britain would not veil the proud crest of her honour for the sake of a shameful peace. The whole world shudders at the shameless perfidy with which the German engagements were violated. The whole world thrills, but with more pride than pity, to the illustrious and splendid courage of Belgium, a nation with which we have now formed ties which will never, it is hoped, be broken.

3. We had to take arms against the GERMAN EMPEROR, and as many as have been baptised into the same communion of corruption. He has revealed himself as a tyrant whose whole life has been a lie. We have endured as well as we might his brutal arrogance, his egotism carried to a degree hardly compatible with sanity. He has led his people to this pass through a long train of villainous intrigue and years of deliberate calculation and falsity. Of all poisons mingled in the cup of national death, the ambition for universal authority is most deadly. The GERMAN EMPEROR has cast out of his people the spirit of liberty. A nation cannot hold other nations in subjection and remain free. He and his colleagues have treated their adversaries as dust under their feet. They have looked upon the world as a Gehenna redeemed only by their presence. Though the course of the war has been brief, its significance has been unexampled. We will not dwell on the frightful outbreaks of sanguinary vindictiveness which have struck the civilised world with horror. These out-

breaks were all the more frightful because sanguinary passion affected the language of righteousness and even of religion. At all costs we have to cast down the war god from his column. The life-work of the GERMAN EMPEROR is now tried by fire, and is already shrivelling in the flame. That many good and true hearts among the German people condemn as sternly as any of us what has been and what is to-day we do not doubt. They are in such a plight that they dare not express their dissent, and even if they took their life in their hands and expressed it we should never hear a word.

4. Our own life as a nation has to be fought for to the death. The British people passionately love the liberties which are their immemorial heritage. The whole beauty and value of life is that it holds treasures for which men would even dare to die. Who will play the part of a craven when his own country is in imminent danger of being ruined and enslaved?

5. Again, this is a war on behalf of the common people. Nothing is more clearly established by history than that military ambition when it takes full possession of a nation is fatal to democratic institutions. The success of Germany would be the end of democracy for many a weary year. Let the nation enter on the path of rapine, styled glory, and the result is sure. The very existence of democracy as it has flourished in this country is threatened with a death wound. If we could imagine the war lords flushed with so stupendous a triumph as a prostrate Europe at their feet, no one would fail to see that the essential elements of honourable, happy, self-respecting life would be at an end.

6. We are fighting for our children. Are they to be born and live in tributary provinces of Germany, harassed and humiliated at every point with the whole stormy and gallant history of their country put to shame and rout? This is what their fate will be if we are subjugated by Germany in the world war. Our fathers fought for us in their

day through long and weary years, through sufferings almost intolerable, through many reverses and treacheries, but they did not live and fight and die in vain. Our glorious Empire is the fruit of their work. Is their work to be undone?

Such are some of the reasons for a general rise to arms. "Set down my name, Sir." The appeal is to all that is least tainted and least craven in the human breast. Nothing less will meet the need. Even at the best we shall have to sacrifice much that is very dear to us, and much that we can hardly bear the thought of losing. But human nature is not so poor a thing as to retreat for the sake of an ignoble and an unreal security. We have the deepest sympathy with those who are sending their best beloved to the battle-field, as many a fond mother, many a brave maiden, many a loving sister is doing to-day. They will not lose their reward. We hate everything in the nature of compulsion. We would not rashly or easily condemn those who are hanging back. We can understand the natural reluctances and shrinkings of the human heart. But the path of duty is very plain. Those of us who are too old to fight must send our sons if we have them. Those who cannot go to the field themselves must seek to have a representative there, and in the glory of that sacrifice they will find something infinitely more glorious, infinitely more exalted, than a base and despised obscurity. Our work lies straight before us. Till this evil spirit is cast out there will be no peace or safety. We must have an end of the Prussian military system. There is not a more flagrant iniquity on the earth.